

COASTAL CONSERVANCY

Staff Recommendation  
September 23, 2021

**Outreach and Engagement for San Diego Coastal Resiliency Planning**

Project No. 21-061-01  
Project Manager: Joel Gerwein

**RECOMMENDED ACTION:** Authorization to disburse up to \$310,000 to Coastal Quest to conduct stakeholder outreach and engagement for coastal resiliency planning for state parks on the San Diego County coast.

**LOCATION:** San Diego County

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EXHIBITS

Exhibit 1: [Project Location Map](#)

Exhibit 2: [Site photographs](#)

Exhibit 3: [Project Letters](#)

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**RESOLUTION AND FINDINGS**

Staff recommends that the State Coastal Conservancy adopt the following resolution and findings.

Resolution:

The State Coastal Conservancy hereby authorizes a grant of an amount not to exceed three hundred ten thousand dollars (\$310,000) to Coastal Quest (“the grantee”) to conduct stakeholder outreach and engagement to inform the coastal resiliency planning for state parks on the San Diego County coast.

Prior to commencement of the project, the grantee shall submit for the review and written approval of the Executive Officer of the Conservancy (Executive Officer) the following:

1. A detailed work program, schedule, and budget.
2. Names and qualifications of any contractors to be retained in carrying out the project.

Findings:

Based on the accompanying staff recommendation and attached exhibits, the State Coastal Conservancy hereby finds that:

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1. The proposed authorization is consistent with Chapter 3 of Division 21 of the Public Resources Code, regarding project planning and climate change.
2. The proposed project is consistent with the current Conservancy Project Selection Criteria and Guidelines.
3. Coastal Quest is a nonprofit organization organized under section 501(c)(3) of the U.S. Internal Revenue Code.

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## **STAFF RECOMMENDATION**

### **PROJECT SUMMARY:**

Staff recommends the Conservancy authorize a \$310,000 grant to Coastal Quest to conduct stakeholder outreach and engagement for coastal resiliency planning for state parks on the San Diego County coast. Coastal Quest’s mission is to build resilient coastal communities. To that end, it is undertaking a coastal resiliency planning project addressing coastal parks owned by the California Department of Parks and Recreation (“State Parks”). The coastal resiliency planning project builds on previous Coastal Quest coastal resilience projects partnering with non-profits, local governments, and state agencies, focusing on Orange County and on Marine Protected Areas, respectively. The resiliency planning effort will address current and future climate change vulnerabilities for nine individual coastal park units and across the entire State Parks San Diego County Coast District (“SDCD”) (Exhibit 1), while also catalyzing State Parks’ climate adaptation work statewide. The project for which staff is recommending Conservancy funding consists of conducting stakeholder outreach and engagement to inform plans for adapting to climate change at nine state parks in San Diego County. The proposed project will inform the larger resiliency planning project.

Coastal resiliency planning for State Parks’ properties is urgently needed. State Parks manages nearly ¼ of the California coastline with 128 coastal units, providing access and recreational opportunities to over 50 million visitors each year. Coastal flooding and erosion have already impacted many coastal parks’ resources and facilities (Exhibit 2). Climate impacts will be more severe and costly unless action is taken to plan, prepare, and respond to sea level rise (SLR) and its associated threats. State Parks released a new SLR Adaptation Strategy (Strategy) in May 2021. The Strategy calls for the completion of vulnerability assessments and adaptation planning for unique State Park assets (i.e., access, recreation, cultural and natural resources, and facilities) at all coastal districts of the State Park System. Given increasing impacts and State Parks’ new Strategy, there is now a timely opportunity to launch vulnerability assessments and adaptation planning for State Parks. Coastal Quest is particularly focused on providing robust outreach and engagement for this effort, especially to underserved communities and tribes, in order to advance its vision of coastal communities, resources, and ecosystems that are sustainable, healthy, and accessible to all people.

The larger coastal resiliency planning project has two phases: 1) vulnerability assessments and identification of adaptation pathways at all nine sites, and 2) feasibility studies and alternatives analyses for adaptation projects at one or two sites. The project proposed for Conservancy

funding consists of conducting stakeholder outreach and engagement to inform the larger planning process, particularly engagement with Tribes and underserved communities. The proposed project has three main components: 1) Visitation Study; 2) Engagement for Phase I planning (Vulnerability Assessments and Adaptation Pathways); and 3) Engagement for Phase II planning (Feasibility Study and Alternatives Analysis).

The visitation study will analyze visitation and demographic data for the nine coastal state park units from 2018 – 2021, omitting 2020 because of changes in visitation due to COVID. Coastal Quest will partner with the Utah State University (USU) Recreation Ecology Lab to analyze data purchased through Streetlight Data collected from mobile GPS signals. The study will analyze visitor origins and demographic data, as well as how these metrics change over time. These data will help Coastal Quest and State Parks understand the primary SDCD park users and will inform the outreach and engagement efforts of the proposed project. The visitation study will help target outreach to communities who use parks in the project area.

Phase I and II outreach and engagement will occur through a variety of methods, including presentations, meetings, and workshops. Coastal Quest will contract with a consultant, who will work with State Parks to prepare an outreach plan to guide this effort. State Parks has strong relationships with key community and stakeholder groups in the SDCD. Building on these relationships, Coastal Quest will consult with local communities near project sites, inland communities that visit the parks, and Tribes, to understand their priorities prior to conducting the vulnerability assessments and in response to potential adaptation alternatives. Coastal Quest will also coordinate and leverage outreach and engagement with the San Diego Regional Climate Collaborative coastal planning efforts. Working with local partners, Coastal Quest will reach out via community events, social media, flyers, and other mechanisms to promote meeting participation and foster connectedness and collaboration. Stipends will be provided to underserved community representatives and Tribes to participate in the planning process. Phase I will involve several virtual and/or in-person public meetings organized geographically, topically and/or by language, while Phase II will involve additional meetings. Both phases will also include surveys and other interactive opportunities via on-line platforms. Coastal Quest will work closely with State Parks and their Tribal Liaison. Materials and events will be in English and Spanish and other languages as necessary.

The project will document the outreach and engagement process to provide a blueprint for outreach for future coastal resilience planning efforts within State Parks and for other land management agencies. Project deliverables will include 1) the visitation study, including analysis of visitation and demographic data and outreach recommendations, 2) the Outreach and Engagement Strategy and Plan, 3) documentation of community meetings and surveys, including survey results and notes from stakeholder meetings, and 4) a webinar to be presented to State Parks and to local agencies describing lessons learned from the outreach effort.

**Site Description:** The San Diego County Coast District of State Parks includes 50 miles of coastline and 13 parks from Carlsbad State Beach to the extreme southwest corner of the continental United States at Border Field State Park; two of these parks are not located on the coast and two of the parks are combined with adjacent units for purposes of the climate

resiliency planning, yielding nine planning sites. The District includes three natural reserves (Torrey Pines, Silver Strand, and the Tijuana River National Estuarine Research Reserve), three campgrounds (South Carlsbad, San Elijo, and Silver Strand State Beach), and many day-use beaches.

**Grant Applicant Qualifications:** Coastal Quest has been working to advance coastal resilience for over a decade, and is currently partnering with other non-profits to carry out projects focused on Marine Protected Area Outreach and Education. In addition, Coastal Quest has convened local, state, and federal agencies and non-profits for coastal resilience conferences to share knowledge and catalyze collaboration. Coastal Quest has a successful track record managing grants from private and public partners such as the Gordon and Betty Moore Foundation and the California Ocean Protection Council. Throughout the project, Dr. Hoffmann will serve as the main point of contact. Dr. Hoffmann, in her former role at Blue Earth Consultants and currently at Coastal Quest, has extensive experience managing projects with large teams, including identifying and hiring expert sub-contractors, managing steering committees and peer review processes, and delivering projects on time and budget.

#### **CONSISTENCY WITH CONSERVANCY'S PROJECT SELECTION CRITERIA & GUIDELINES:**

The proposed project is consistent with the Conservancy's Project Selection Criteria and Guidelines, last updated on October 2, 2014, in the following respects:

##### **Required Criteria**

1. **Promotion of the Conservancy's statutory programs and purposes:** See the "Consistency with Conservancy's Enabling Legislation" section below.
2. **Consistency with purposes of the funding source:** See the "Project Financing" section below.
3. **Promotion and implementation of state plans and policies:** This project works to implement the following Climate Justice goal from the *2018 Safeguarding California Plan*: 1) Actively engage, educate, and partner with communities to enable early, continuous, and meaningful participation in adaptation initiatives. The project will utilize the following strategy from the 2018 Plan: Develop best practices for seeking inclusive participation in planning decisions related to sea level rise and climate change along the coast, such as: using targeted, culturally-sensitive communication to engage underserved, low income, and linguistically isolated communities and communities of color, providing interpreters, offering a variety of venues for public comment, and locating community meetings so that they are accessible to public transportation and closest to communities most affected by climate impacts. The project will further these goals by utilizing best practices to engage with stakeholders from tribes and underserved communities.

This project is consistent with the 2015 *California @ 50 Million: The Environmental Goals and Policy Report* which seeks to "build resiliency into new planning processes and into

ongoing planning efforts.” The project will further this goal by informing the larger coastal resiliency planning project for State Parks’ San Diego Coast District.

In addition, this project advances the following objectives of the *Ocean Protection Council (OPC) Strategic Plan* by supporting stakeholder engagement for coastal resiliency planning in State Parks’ San Diego Coast District:

- 1.1. Build Resiliency to Sea-Level Rise, Coastal Storms, Erosion, and Flooding.
- 2.1. Enhance engagement with tribes.
- 2.2. Enhance engagement with underserved communities. The project supports Action 2.2.2 under Objective 2.2: *Develop, refine, begin, and expand implementation of strategies for effectively engaging and partnering with underserved communities on ocean and coastal resource protection, access, policy, and management by 2021.*
4. **Support of the public:** The project is broadly supported by communities in San Diego County. See Exhibit 3.
5. **Location:** See the “Project Summary”.
6. **Need:** The larger project has secured funding to support vulnerability assessment and adaptation planning, but, without Conservancy funding, the stakeholder engagement effort would be greatly reduced in scope.
7. **Greater-than-local interest:** State Parks’ San Diego Coast District parks are resources of statewide significance, visited by millions of people each year. In addition, this project will be a model and catalyst for incorporating community engagement into State Parks resiliency planning throughout the California coast.
8. **Sea level rise vulnerability:** The project involves outreach and engagement to inform planning to directly address sea level rise impacts. Funding the project would be a proactive step to protect our coastal communities and economy as well as our natural resources, public health, and recreational amenities from the impacts of sea level rise in a manner that considers the needs of tribes and underrepresented communities.

#### **Additional Criteria**

9. **Urgency:** Climate change poses imminent threats to the project area. Planning to address these impacts is urgently needed.
10. **Leverage:** See the “Project Financing” section below.
11. **Innovation:** The larger project will utilize innovative methods, assessing the vulnerability to SLR of a broader range of assets than traditionally evaluated, including natural and cultural resources, access, and recreational opportunities. The project will use innovative outreach and engagement tools and incentives, such as analysis of Streetlight data and participant stipends.
12. **Readiness:** Coastal Quest and State Parks are ready to begin work as soon as funding is made available.

13. **Realization of prior Conservancy goals:** In 2016, the Conservancy collaborated with State Parks to conduct a broad assessment of the exposure of State Parks’ coastal park units to SLR. While the 2016 project was useful for establishing a baseline to identify general statewide priorities in terms of SLR vulnerabilities, this project involves more site-specific, detailed analyses to develop adaptation strategies for each park.
14. **Vulnerability from climate change impacts other than sea level rise:** As part of the vulnerability assessments and adaptation planning, the project will analyze climate change impacts other than sea level rise, such as extreme heat and extreme storms.

**PROJECT FINANCING**

<b>Coastal Conservancy</b>	<b>\$310,000</b>
Ocean Protection Council	\$50,000
<b>Project Total</b>	<b>\$360,000</b>

Unless specifically labelled “Required Match” the other sources of funding listed above are provided as estimates. The Coastal Conservancy does not typically require matching funds, nor does it require documentation of expenditures from other funders. Typical grant conditions require grantees to provide any funds needed to complete the project.

Funding for the project will come from an appropriation of the Safe Drinking Water, Water Quality and Supply, Flood Control, River and Coastal Protection Bond Act of 2006, codified at PRC Sections 75001 *et seq.* (“Proposition 84”). Consistent with Section 75060, the proposed project will promote access to and enjoyment of the state’s coastal resources by carrying out planning to facilitate the parks’ resilience to climate change. Section 75060(f) allocates funds “for the protection of San Diego Bay and adjacent watersheds”. “San Diego Bay and adjacent watersheds” includes all coastal and bay watersheds within San Diego County (Section 75072.6) including the project area. “Protection,” as defined in Section 75005(m), includes “actions necessary to allow the continued use and enjoyment of property or natural resources.” Planning for coastal resiliency is necessary to enable the parks in the project area to continue to operate and provide access to the public in the face of climate change.

The California Ocean Protection Council has granted \$50,000 for the outreach and engagement component of the larger resiliency planning project. States Parks will contribute \$108,500 in matching resources to the larger project, including both the technical resiliency planning and the outreach and engagement. State Parks’ contribution will be in the form of in-kind staff time.

**CONSISTENCY WITH CONSERVANCY’S ENABLING LEGISLATION:**

The project would be undertaken pursuant to Section 31111 and 31113 of Chapter 3 of Division 21 of the Public Resources Code, regarding planning grants and the potential impacts of climate change on resources within the Conservancy’s jurisdiction, respectively. Section 31111 authorizes the Conservancy to fund and undertake plans and feasibility studies, and to award

grants to nonprofit organizations for these purposes. Consistent with this section, the project would provide a grant to a nonprofit organization to support coastal resiliency planning. Pursuant to Section 31113 (b), the Conservancy is authorized to award grants to nonprofit organizations to undertake projects that reduce greenhouse gas emissions, address extreme weather events, sea level rise, storm surge, beach and bluff erosion, saltwater intrusion, flooding, and other coastal hazards that threaten coastal communities, infrastructure, and natural resources. Consistent with this section, the proposed authorization would award a grant to a nonprofit organization to support planning to facilitate adaptation to sea level rise and other climate change impacts.

**CONSISTENCY WITH CONSERVANCY'S [2018-2022 STRATEGIC PLAN](#) GOAL(S) & OBJECTIVE(S):**

Consistent with **Goal 8, Objective A** of the Conservancy's 2018-2022 Strategic Plan, the proposed project will help the development of adaptation plans that will identify specific projects to address sea level rise and other impacts of climate change.

Consistent with **Goal 16, Objective B** of the Conservancy's 2018-2022 Strategic Plan, the proposed project will support a planning effort that would increase the resilience to climate change impacts of communities along the coast of California that lack capacity due to systemic inequities. The project would support coastal resiliency planning for parks that are adjacent to DACs and SDACs and would include outreach and engagement efforts to incorporate the concerns of underserved communities.

**CEQA COMPLIANCE:**

The project is categorically exempt from the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) under 14 Cal. Code of Regulations §15306 in that the planning effort will involve information collection and resource evaluation activities as part of a study leading to an action that has not yet been approved, adopted, or funded by a public agency, and these planning activities do not result in a serious or major disturbance to an environmental resource.

Upon approval of the project, Conservancy staff will file a Notice of Exemption.